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Achievers

JOURNEYS TO SUCCESS

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provocative



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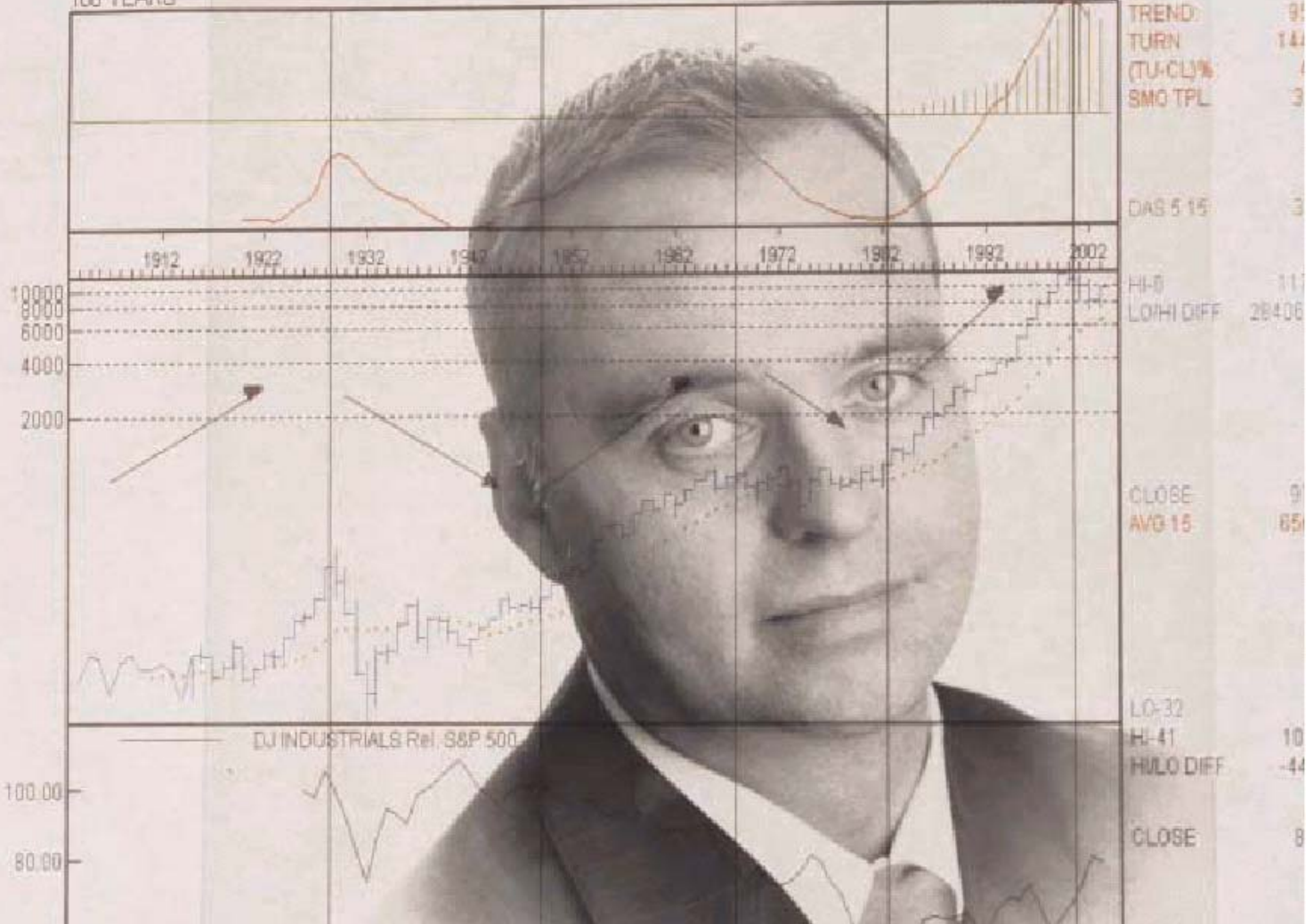
**Neil
McIver**

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100 YEARS

1904 - 29OCT03



Riding the Wheel of History

"Histories make men wise." —Francis Bacon

Neil McIver relies on history. He points to a graph charting stock market trends and cycles over the past century, and says, "You need a sense of history. Work in the context of that. If you do, when the market is down, it doesn't frighten you. You know the wheel's going to turn."

McIver measures the fluctuations of the market in "tides, waves and ripples. Tides last for ten or more years, waves for three to four years, ripples—usually event-driven—for six months." This is the kind of advice he has given investors in newspaper columns, on radio, and in his regular investment letter.

He writes with an uncommon elegance. A sample: "I suppose because the world can, rather easily, conspire to prove us wrong, I've always refrained from highlighting the accuracy of our research suggestions and forecasts."

Now, in his Park Place office, overlooking the continually changing Vancouver skyline, he says, "The last three years weren't comfortable for anybody. As the market came down, the full sphincter was taking place." But, at the same time, McIver's practice doubled. And "it felt good, after three terrible years, to be able to show clients a positive rate of return."

This boyish looking financial advisor, who heads McIver Wealth Management Consulting Group, has as his model Phillips Hager & North, a firm noted for prudence, prestige and continued success. "I'm not here to hit home runs," says McIver. "I'm here to preserve wealth."

Neil McIver began his career in 1985, straight out of high school, as a messenger for Pemberton Securities. His father is a doctor and his two brothers are lawyers, but he knew he had "natural mathematical ability" and "always felt comfortable in the financial market." Today, as an independent consultant within RBC Dominion Securities, he has clients—individuals and institutions—across the country. Despite his youthful appearance, McIver manages significant assets for a substantial client list, and is determined to continue expanding his business.

"I'm not aware of anyone who approaches the market with the same level of sophistication for individual clients," says McIver. "I don't look at things the way most brokers do." Instead, he has developed a system through which individual investors receive the same level of expertise and service as an institutional fund.

He works a long day, with principal backup from two striking and formidably intelligent young women: Amber Lichtenberg and Saleena Vellani. And during the dry times, when others were cutting back, McIver "spent a lot on technology, for myself and the staff, in the office and at home."

Competition has been a big part of McIver's life. Competition and staying in shape—physically, mentally, professionally. In 1979, at age twelve, he was the youngest runner in the Vancouver Marathon. He covered the 26 miles, 385 yards (42.2 kilometres) in three hours and ten minutes. The next year, he cut that time to 2:58. McIver swam competitively, as well, and still gets in the pool regularly with "other washed-up competitive swimmers." On his mountain bike, he cycles the North Shore mountains, sometimes traveling as far as eighty kilometres. And, although he's not sure he'll be on the ice this season, he has, for the past few years, played hockey in what are known as the "beer leagues."

McIver met his wife, Tricia, while running along the West Vancouver waterfront. "I couldn't catch her," he says. Tricia, a chartered accountant, now retired, has worked for such firms as Price Waterhouse and Standard Life, specializing in tax and estate issues. The McIvers still run. And "she's still faster than I am."

A confessed "voracious reader," McIver would recognize these near opening lines from *The Great Gatsby*: "Just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." McIver is keenly aware of this, and that is the reason that each year, as winter approaches, he and Tricia buy sports bags, fill them with new items—hats, gloves, scarves, boots, toiletries, food certificates—and

drive into less fortunate sections of the city, looking for people who, perhaps, could use these things. "It's a tremendous experience," he says. "Lots of hugs, lots of tears. It's a little selfish, but so rewarding."

When he's not running or swimming or reading—"two or three books at a time, history, government, some yarn my wife discovered"—McIver is involved in politics. Not as a candidate—"I'd rather be in the back room"—but as a supporter. He sits on the board of West Vancouver-Garibaldi MLA Ted Nebbeling and he is the chair of Alliance MP John Reynolds's "election readiness" committee. McIver calls the proposed coming together of Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives "a tremendous opportunity, really exciting—in the true spirit of John A. Macdonald."

McIver may not have an historical chart that gives him a sense of where Canada is going politically, but he does have a feeling for what the coming years may mean to investors. "Right now," he says, "investor optimism may be a little overdone, but there's a reasonable environment for investment into the next year. However, the next ten years will be more challenging than the last ten."

He isn't worried. He has history on his side. And his job, as he sees it, is the preservation of wealth. "Whether the market goes up or down," he says, "live up to the promise of service. I have a passion for what I do—a passion for investing people's money responsibly."

In a way, the marathon he ran at age twelve is a metaphor for McIver's life. He believes in pacing himself and staying the course. Looking ahead, he says, "I'm excited about the next twenty-five years"—close to a marathon distance—with an organization like Phillips Hager & North at the end, but under the name McIver Wealth Management Consulting Group.

Asked if his is a stressful life, he says, "My father told me it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you work hard and do your best. If you're confident with what you're doing, you can sleep at night. So at the end of the day, it's no more stressful than working in an ice cream shop." ❄